

ADJOURNMENT MOTION.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai : Sir,—

Mr. T. Krishna Pillai : Sir, on a point of order. The business of the House is now over. We are now taking up the adjournment motion which says 'the business of the House be now adjourned' etc.

President : Technically, I think it is correct.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai : But practically the motion will be that the House do now adjourn.

President : In the usual Parliamentary procedure, there is no difference made between the various motions for adjournment of debate. All debates on matters of importance in Parliament are generally initiated by motions for adjournment for the day or for a recess. Every day the House meets at 2.45 and by law the sitting goes on till 11 o'clock and if they want to have a discussion on an important matter, a private member or minister moves for adjournment, asking that 'the House do now adjourn' and thereupon they discuss any topical question. All foreign debates are generally on motions of adjournment.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai : Sir, I beg leave to move the adjournment of the business of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, *viz.*, the serious situation created by rat falls in the town of Quilon.

Sir, I am sure that the House is aware of the serious situation that has arisen in Quilon.

President : I am glad to inform the honourable member that according to the latest information there have been no rat falls yesterday.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai : I ventured to bring forward this adjournment motion specifically on the ground that there is some idea in the minds of some people that because the rat falls are decreasing, the stringent measures that ought to be continued to prevent rat falls may be relaxed. The ill-informed public opinion also thinks and often expresses their chagrine at the enforcement of the rather irksome control measures. It is to point out to the public that this is a matter which cannot be left like that and to bring to the attention of the Government that the strenuous endeavours that they are now making should be continued for a sufficiently long time to eradicate completely the danger that the motion has been brought in. Sir, I find that our people, not accustomed to the dangers of this fell disease are not prone to take it very seriously and they are not able to understand the serious consequences arising out of negligence in this matter. We have

not heard of plague anywhere in Travancore till recently ; but it made its appearance first in Alleppey in 1112 and we find its recurrence again after three years in 1115 in Alleppey. Quilon, which was thought to be one of the healthiest towns of the State, has also come in for the attack. Such an important industrial and commercial centre as Quilon, if it is affected by this epidemic, will lose its trade and commerce considerably. More than that, it will be a source of danger to the capital of the State which is nearer to Quilon than Alleppey. Rat falls began this year in Quilon between the 15th and 28th of Dhanu as reported by the authorities. But, my personal enquiries in Quilon led to the knowledge that, as a matter of fact, there were rat falls even before that which was either intentionally or unconsciously not brought to the notice of the Government. Some people who came to do their business in the town of Quilon, it seems, got infected and died when they returned to the mofussil and these were not brought to the notice of the authorities. It was said that they died because of the malefic influence of some ghost. At last there was some suspicion regarding a few cases, which was brought to the hospital authorities and on their advice a further scrutiny into these matters was made. One rat was examined and positive signs of plague were observed in it.

I take this opportunity publicly to acknowledge with gratitude the very sincere and strenuous efforts made by the District Magistrate of Quilon and the Director of Public Health who came to the spot and energetically prosecuted the necessary preventive measures and also the Quilon Municipality and the staff that gave able assistance to the preventive work. If plague has not spread and if rat-falls today are less in Quilon, it is due to the combined and co-operative activities of all these departments and the prompt measures taken by them. My only intention in moving this motion is to bring to the attention of Government that the efforts now made by the various departments as well as Government should not slacken so soon as the rat-falls have either ceased or diminished. On the other hand, the special staff that has been recommended as a result of the conference of the Municipal authorities and others ought to be sanctioned and there should be no niggardliness with regard to it. It is not enough to keep quiet as soon as we see that the rat falls cease for the moment. We have to continue the watch over this for at least three years. If you are to be sure that this disease has been absolutely eradicated, you must continuously watch over it for a long period. It will be penny-wise-and-pound-foolish policy if we stop all endeavour so soon as we find the diminution of rat-fall and do not continue the preventive measures any longer. One of the reasons for the outbreak of plague in Alleppey, I am told, is

[Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai.]

because of the Government having stopped all the measures taken on a former occasion when it broke out in 1112 so soon as it subsided. It is on account of the apprehension that there should not be any such thing happening in regard to Quilon that I brought forward this motion for the acceptance of the House.

Sometimes plague breaks out as soon as the rains commence. Therefore they say that we have to keep a vigorous watch till the rains begin to fall. We have to take stringent measures specially with regard to certain go-downs which I understand are the source of the infection and which have been responsible for the breaking out of the disease. I think Sir, that it is not necessary for me to labour the point very much because the House will realise the seriousness of the situation and the absolute necessity of seeing that everything possible is done not merely now but continuously so that it will be possible for us to have a cent per cent safety from this fell disease. With these words I commend the motion for the acceptance of the House.

Mr. V. Sankara Menon : What does the member mean by saying that the measures should be continued for three years more? Does the member suggest that relaxation should not be made for a further period of three years?

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai : What I meant was that the efforts made by Government should be such as to prevent the recurrence of the plague at all possible costs. If it is necessary to continue the efforts for three years, then that has to be done for that period. If it is necessary to continue the efforts for ten years, then they must be continued for that period. The meaning of what I said is that strenuous efforts must be continued till the danger of recurrence of plague is completely eradicated.

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi (*Karunagapalli, Kartikapally and Ambalapuzha cum Shertallai*): I second the motion and in doing so I wish to congratulate my honourable friend on his commendable sense of public duty which prompted him to draw the attention of this House to this important problem. At the same time I wish to point out that neither the Government nor the honourable members of this House would be doing a real service to the trade and commerce of this country by making this a huge issue and advertising that there is plague in this part of India. I know that many foreign ports have declared Alleppey and Quilon as plague infected area. Of course it is quite another thing to point out to the authorities that Quilon and Alleppey should be protected against plague infection. The foreign ports have stated that

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai: May I know whether the member would suggest the suppression of these facts for the advancement of commerce and industry?

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi: That needs no answer.

I need only say that we should take all precautions in good time and there are occasions when the non-officials have to be as much politic as the Government are sometimes. It is very good to draw the attention of the Government to remedy the evils. But at the same time we have to see that such things are not given unnecessary publicity. The fact is that there is no great danger of plague in this country, thanks to the efforts of the Public Health Department and also the different municipalities.

It is also most miraculous and providential that plague did not spread further, because of the adoption of killing the rats in the old way and getting rid of the rodent enemies either by getting them into cages or otherwise. In Alleppey, it had a wonderful effect. I have only to say that our finances did not allow for going in for more modern contrivances such as rat-proof go-downs or rat-proof houses and all the list of requirements given out by public health pandits, to effectively stop the possibility of plague. In a way, we are particularly lucky in so far as plague showed signs of subsiding in Alleppey. As my honourable friend Mr. Kottur pointed out, owing to one of those not-very-wise steps of the Government of effecting economy, they retrenched the staff and allowed the rodents with a vengeance on Dr. Gopala Pillai, to multiply in larger numbers.

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: It is not the Government's fault. As a result of repeated representations from the municipality there, the preventive work at Alleppey had to be stopped.

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi: Whatever it may be, the eventual responsibility lies with the Government in that matter.

I would also in this connection suggest that we on this side of the country should not be troubled by these rodents and in good time the Public Health Department may take good steps in consultation with the local municipality to guard public health against this fell disease.

President: I think the best plan would be for Dr. Gopala Pillai to explain exactly what the position is. Then in the light of those facts the other honourable members might speak. I will now ask Dr. Gopala Pillai to place the full facts in connection with the motion before the House.

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai : Sir, I should thank the honourable member who moved the adjournment motion for enabling me to bring to the notice of this House and the Government the various anti-plague measures that have been launched forth by the Public Health Department. Before proceeding further I have to state that the sin is not that of Travancore. Plague was transmitted to us by the merchants of Mattancherri. Mr. Bristow, Administrative Officer and Harbour Engineer-in-Chief, who obviously could not bear any malice towards the Cochin merchants, says that plague has been endemic in Mattancherri for the past 50 years. Mr. Bristow in his note says that the Port Health Officer of British Cochin who too could not have any malice towards the Cochin merchants has given him a history of plague at Mattancherri. There is an article by Mr. Bristow in the "Madras Mail" dated 20th January 1938.

He observes :—

"For the past 50 years there have been four epidemics and for the past ten years three according to the Health Officer of British Cochin".

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi : Is the member in order in reading out from a newspaper article?

President : The information that is supplied by Mr. Bristow who is the Administrative Officer and Harbour Engineer-in-Chief of Cochin is a very important one. The suggestion made by the Director of Public Health is also equally important because only yesterday the Cochin newspaper enjoying the patronage of Government stated that there is no plague in Cochin and that there has been a kind of deliberate attack on the part of the head of the administration to suggest that there is plague there. The suggestion made by the Director of Public Health in Cochin that plague in Mattancherri had been endemic for the past 50 years and it has been an epidemic very often during the last ten years are important points. Therefore the allegation that has unfortunately been given wide currency, viz., that cyano-gassing in Alleppey is resorted to because there is plague in Travancore, and that the rice coming from Cochin is not actually cyano-gassed in Alleppey, is a very serious allegation. It is only to enlighten the House about this matter that the Director of Public Health has referred to the observations of the Director of Public Health, Cochin.

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai : Sir, I may be permitted to quote a few extracts from the note on Public Health Organisation in Cochin, by the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India. This is important because there is a misconception

about the various anti-plague measures that have been introduced by the Travancore Government.

"Travancore State territory at no point touches the port area, but the Government of Travancore are intimately concerned with its trade and health conditions, since 30 per cent. of all the imported grain eventually passes into Travancore territory."

Sir, this actually means that we are getting not only 90 per cent. of the rice, but also cent per cent of the plague infection from Cochin. I read this because this is a special report by the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India. Again he says :—

"The repeated appearance of plague in Mattancherri, however, is a serious matter to this new port, if, as the Administrative Officer says, it is desired to preserve her ancient role of rice depot. There is no doubt that it would suffer gravely if the rice trade were to drift elsewhere because of the failure to take adequate steps to stamp out this infection."

To us it is not only a rice depot but also a plague depot. We have been getting plague from Mattancherri for the last few years. Till now the infection was only in Alleppey and now it has begun to appear even in Quilon. When this is the state of affairs how can the Government relax any plague control measures? He says that the action taken by the Travancore Government is perfectly justified. Incidentally he again observes :—

"The Director of Public Health, Travancore, who was present at the conference, stated that friction was caused because of the Travancore Government's action in continuing fumigations of grain for a period of three months after the port was declared free from plague. Article 6 of the International Sanitary Convention would seem to justify this precaution and recent events would also support the Travancore Government's decision. The appearance of plague in different parts of Travancore has compelled the Public Health authorities of that State to take stringent measures and, in the circumstances, this seems to be reasonable."

In the face of these statements and impressions of an eminent Public Health Officer intimately connected with the Government of India and who is also a Sanitary authority, how can any Government who owe a duty to their subjects relax any control measures?

He also says :

"The important question to be decided is whether or not the development of the Port and the public health of the two Indian States and a British Indian province are to be subordinated to vested private interests. In my view, there is no doubt how that question should be answered."

Sir, Dr. A. J. H. Russel again remarks that the measures that were being taken in Cochin, were not effective at all and he was dissatisfied with the insanitary and unsatisfactory condition of Mattancherri.

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi: May I ask whether the Port Trust authorities at Cochin moved in the matter

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: Yes, Sir. Their suggestions were not of any value because they were not carried out in good time. This is what Dr. Russell says :

"From what I was told I believe that during the recent plague outbreak, deliberate concealment of plague cases and deaths occurred."

President. This is what the report says :

"During my visit I attended a conference of the Dewan of Cochin, Municipal Chairman, Mattancherri, Municipal Chairman, Ernakulam, Civil Surgeon, Ernakulam, Civil Surgeon, British Cochin, Health Officer, Mattancherri, Director of Public Health, Cochin, Director of Public Health, Travancore, Director of Public Health, Madras, District Health Officer, Malabar. The Dewan of Cochin presided. From what I was told I believe that during the recent plague outbreak deliberate concealment of plague cases and deaths occurred. Only five plague deaths were recorded during that outbreak, an impossibly small number when there was in existence such a high incidence of plague amongst the rats."

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: We suspended certain arrangements at Arukutty on the understanding that Cochin Government would do cyanide work more effectively. In fact *vallams* laden with rice bags require fumigation at least for three hours. But they have been doing it only for ten or fifteen minutes and the greater the number of boats the shorter was the duration of the cyano-gassing. That might have been one of the reasons why plague again broke out in Alleppey. After investigation, it was seen that rat-fall occurred in go-downs where rice bags obtained directly from Mattancherri were stored. In Quilon also the same thing happened. I inspected certain go-downs outside the affected area and also go-downs where a number of rice-bags have been stored. There were no rat-falls anywhere outside the affected area. Such being the case it is not at all charitable on the part of any authority, or, for that matter, on the part of even newspaper correspondents, to attribute motives for the effective measures taken by any controlling authorities. In Travancore, there are about 60 lakhs of people which is nearly four or five times the population of Cochin. We import 90 per cent of rice, i. e. about 95 to 99 per cent of plague infection. Because the destinations of imported rice into Travancore are numerous, we disseminate infection in so many parts of Travancore. Some towns in North and Central Travancore *viz.*, Kottayam, Changanacherry, Kayencolam, Quilon and a few other stations deal direct trade with Cochin. A rat-flea survey conducted a few years ago revealed the fact that Cheopis is very common in these places and in shops that store rice from Mattancherri you will find

that the rate of flea incidence will be very high. Formerly the rate stood at .04. But recently it was found as high as .6. This is indeed very high. Such conditions prevail in almost all the places that directly deal in rice trade with Mattancherri. We are faced with the danger of importing plague and spreading it to all parts of Travancore, unless Government take adequate and rigorous measures immediately. I had in my own mind cherished the desire of requesting Government for diverting rice trade from Mattancherri to Quilon or some other port because, as long as Mattancherri continues to exist in its present unsatisfactory condition and also imports plague into Travancore, rice should not be got down from Mattancherri. The Public Health Commissioner, Dr. Russel, has foreseen this danger that is likely to befall Travancore. He has repeatedly emphasised how Travancore Government and also the British Government should take due precautions against the importation of plague. In spite of repeated requests, it has not been found to be a practical proposition to take effective preventive measures in Mattancherri. The merchants in Mattancherri belong to various places outside Cochin. They have no local interest or any interest in regard to the health or other conditions of the people of Cochin or Travancore; much less for the health of the people of Travancore than for the health of the people of Cochin. That they do not mind about the health of these two big States can be seen from the fact that plague was imported a few years back into Kunnencolam where there were eleven attacks and ten deaths. So infection is showing a tendency of spreading in places extending from Kunnencolam to Quilon. With the foci of infection thus distributed it is very easy in these places for plague to spread out in an epidemic form at any time. The chances are greater for the spread of this disease, because soon after the rat-fall in a particular place the authorities concerned are not notified about the occurrence. If notified early, we can easily institute control measures. But the difficulty, as Sir Russel pointed out, is because of the concealment of cases. We come to know of the occurrence of a rat-fall or the case of a death only after it has grown up in the form of an epidemic. If effective measures are taken soon after the first rat-fall, then it is easy for control. All these factors put together form a very grave menace that Travancore has to face in future.

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi: In view of the fact that Cochin is anxious to conceal death, may I know what ratio does the ten or eleven deaths reported bear to the actual number of deaths? Can the Director of Public Health make any guess on that point?

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: We cannot make any guess in regard to deaths that are taking place outside this State.

[Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai.]

Conditions existing at present do not permit the authorities in Travancore to make any relaxation in the control measures in any of the Observation Stations in the Travancore State. The honourable mover of the resolution said that stringent measures should not be relaxed. It is the idea of Government to continue stringent measures as long as they apprehend rat-falls. Soon after the report of rat-falls, effective control measures were adopted in Quilon. A special Plague Officer with powers of a Division Peishkar, was appointed to control the plague outbreak there. The Director of Public Health and the District Health Officer camped at Quilon and took effective control measures immediately. The District Health Officer halted there for nearly two weeks. The chief control measures instituted in Quilon are trapping of rats, inoculation of people in the affected localities, disinfection of shops in the neighbourhood of places where rat-falls occurred and cyanogas fumigation of grains. These are the most effective methods for controlling plague, and these measures were instituted immediately.

Sahib Bahadur Abdul Tayeb Shaikh Kaderbhoy (*Commerce and Industry South*): May I know whether he is aware that in Quilon inoculation is carried on on several persons with the same needle without sterilizing it? Is it advisable to do like that?

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: The needle is sterilized immediately after each inoculation.

Sahib Bahadur Abdul Tayeb Shaikh Kaderboy: There are only one or two doctors in Quilon going about from one place to another, and they do not sterilize the needles.

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: I very much doubt whether that could have occurred.

Sahib Bahadur Abdul Tayeb Shaikh Kaderbhoy: I have received very many complaints on the matter.

President: It is a statement difficult to understand; because if a doctor actually inoculates one man and without sterilizing the needle inoculates another, he is liable to be punished. I trust that the honorable member will see whether there is any foundation in that statement.

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: It could not have occurred. It is due to aversion for inoculation that such complaints arise. I also have received some such complaints. In Quilon about 2000 people including children who frequent the affected localities, have been inoculated. Till now there has been only one death reported in Quilon. An intensive propaganda with the help of public health cinema was carried out literally in every nook and corner of Quilon,

I am glad to inform the mover of the resolution that there has been no rat-fall yesterday or the day before. This department has acted very promptly. I am very thankful to the member for the tribute of appreciation that he has paid to the Public Health Department for the control measures taken in Quilon. These measures will be continued for some time.

I have to answer certain other questions. Eradication of plague from Quilon, I doubt, is not possible as long as rat-falls continue in Mattancherri.

With regard to the stopping of plague work in Alleppey, I may inform the House that it was as a result of repeated representations from members of the municipality or citizens of the locality that Government were forced to stop work there. A member was boasting recently that he was responsible for stopping the work at Alleppey.

Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi : Is the nearness of Alleppey to Mattancherri in any way responsible for that state of affairs?

Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai : The mover of the motion suggested that measures will have to be continued till the onset of rains. But the onset of rains is the best season suited for the spread of plague. The early showers in April and May help the advent of plague. The non-epidemic period is between February and March. I assure the mover of the resolution that all preventive measures will be effectively carried out in Quilon and there is no need for any apprehension as to the possibility of the spread of plague in Quilon.

Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla (Mavelikara and Tiruvalla cum Pattanamthitta) : I also support the motion that stringent measures should be taken to eradicate this nuisance throughout the State. But while stringent measures are being adopted, men who want to take their goods from Cochin and Mattancherri should not be vexed in their ordinary business. I understand that there is great deal of delay for merchants in Travancore to take their goods from Cochin. If that is true, I believe it is a great hardship. I have heard from several merchants in Kottayam that they have been stopped in several places for a very long time and that some of the subordinates of the department have not always been polite. It may not be possible for us to expect that the subordinates of the department shall be always polite. But I hope that those who are responsible for controlling these measures should look into this matter and make all possible arrangements so that it may be possible for merchants to carry their goods to Travancore with the least possible delay and inconvenience. I read in the newspapers that in another place, you, Sir, made some announcements

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about the taking of goods from Cochin to Travancore. I have not been able to get any clear idea about it from the newspapers.

There is another point which has frightened me and that is with regard to the diversion of trade, especially rice, from Cochin to Quilon even when conditions are normal. I understand that there is a difference of 4 to 6 annas per bag of rice between the price in Cochin and Quilon.

President : That matter is not really within the scope of the adjournment motion.

Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla : If rice trade is to be diverted from Cochin to Quilon which will mean the additional payment of 6 annas per bag, that will be a very great hardship to so many merchants.

President : Before this debate closes, I think, in view of certain deliberately fomented agitation, it is necessary that the position of Government in this matter should be elucidated. I am glad that reference has been made to the authoritative publication of the Public Health Commissioner of the Government of India. That document was prepared as a result of that officer's visit to Cochin. The status of the Public Health Commissioner of the Government of India, Col. Russell, in regard to public health matters, is not only of national importance but has been internationally recognised by bodies like the Singapore Epidemiological Bureau. I also happen to know what position Col. Russell holds in international bodies on matters of public health.

Now, let it be clearly understood that Travancore is vitally and fundamentally interested in the prosperity of the Cochin Harbour. Our income is to no small extent derived from the customs receipts of the Cochin Harbour. Under the arrangement that exists between the British Government, the Travancore Government and the Cochin Government, normally speaking, we get every year between Rs. 18 lakhs and Rs. 22 lakhs as our share of the Cochin Harbour revenues. It is therefore in the highest degree unlikely that the Travancore Government would cut off its nose to spite its face ; and it is equally unlikely and impossible to conceive that the Travancore Government would, in a fit of malice or pique, mention plague where really it does not exist. This is what has actually appeared in a newspaper—

“ We do not know whether even the plague bacilli bear malice towards Sir. C. P. No one has complained except the Travancore Government of plague in Cochin.”

It is not a question of the plague bacilli bearing any malice towards Sir C. P. The Government of Travancore are very keen indeed that the prosperity of Cochin should be maintained and enhanced if for no other reason than that they want their revenue also to be maintained and enhanced ; and it would be with the utmost

reluctance that any step would be taken or countenanced by the Travancore Government which would result in the shrinkage of trade in Cochin.

Having said that, let me bring to the notice of this honourable House exactly what Col. Russell has said ; and the House will bear with me if I read one or two sentences from the report, parts of which have already been placed before the House by our Director of Public Health. This document, issued by the Government of India, came into the hands of the Travancore Government on the 9th of November 1939. One of the first points raised in the report is the rice trade of Cochin.

"The rice trade of Cochin port is almost wholly located in Mattancherri, one of the most overcrowded towns in India. The great majority of the grain godowns are situated along the water front on a strip of land which by statutory definition lies in the port area."

"The repeated appearance of plague in Mattancherri, however, is a serious matter to this new port, if, as the Administrative Officer says, it is desired to preserve her ancient role of a rice depot."

The suggestions that are made in the Report are—

- "(1) the construction of rat-proof granaries on Willingdon Island, these to be rented to the present traders for grain storage purposes and their use to be made compulsory ; or
- (2) complete reconstruction in accordance with approved rat-proof designs of all godowns lying along the two miles of water front in Mattancherri municipality."

These measures have so far not been effectively taken.

"My inspection of the grain godown area made it obvious that the anti-plague measures being practised in Mattancherri are unlikely to be effective."

"During my visit I attended a conference.....From what I was told I believe that during the recent plague outbreak, deliberate concealment of plague cases and deaths occurred."

"Whilst the Director of Public Health, Travancore, was not prepared to accept everything that the Cochin Officers reported in connection with plague, he said that, during the previous outbreak, he has accepted without much demur the fumigation certificates issued in Cochin after the *vallom* had been treated with cyanide in the harbour before they left for the customs stations on the borders of the Travancore State..... The appearance of plague in different parts of Travancore has compelled the Public Health authorities of that State to take stringent measures and, in the circumstances, this seems to be reasonable."

That is the considered judgment of a person unbiassed either in favour of Travancore or in favour of Cochin in relation to this matter, an officer whose main duty is to look after the public health.

[President]

of India. The conclusions he draws are that Mattancherri is a potential source of plague, that adequate and effective measures have so far not been taken there and that reasonable and stringent precautions must be taken in Travancore to avoid the spread of plague. The Director of Public Health reported to this Government—and this must be borne in mind—that the cyano-gassing that was done at Mattancherri was not sufficient in his opinion ; because, cyano-gassing has, in order to be effective, to take place for about three hours, whereas, in Mattancherri, only 15 minutes were being allowed. Therefore it was not a case of the Travancore Government acting *suo motu* or with any inherent malice or cussedness. It was in their effort to preserve the public health of Travancore that, on the report of their Director of Public Health, they decided that, in the circumstances reported by him, the only alternative was that on all frontiers cyano-gassing should be effected by Travancore authorities ; and that was done. It so happened that, at that time, there were a number of *valloms* or other vessels in the back-water and canals. There is no gainsaying the fact that a certain amount of delay occurred. There is no point in concealing these matters ; it is better to make things absolutely clear so that a campaign of lies need not go on. It has been alleged.

“.....that the Travancore Government as per the advice of Sir C. P. had imported and stored at Alleppey or some other place a large number of rice bags some months before at a high price and that since the price of rice fell down afterwards the rice bags are lying there unsold. We should ask whether Sir C. P. is sure that these symptoms of plague do not start from the godowns where these bags rot or not ”

That has been the kind of attack that has been going on ; and it has sometimes found vocal expression and has otherwise been repeated from place to place and from person to person.

Some facts had better be borne in mind. Cochin sends into Travancore, and Travancore consumes, nearly Rs. 2½ crores worth of rice roughly every year. The total cost of the rice that the Travancore Government purchased recently comes to Rs. 13 lakhs, just less than fifteen days' supply for Travancore ; and the suggestion is that, in order to safeguard their interests involved in this Rs. 13 lakhs worth of rice, the whole of the import trade from Cochin was disorganised and dislocated by the Travancore Government. Moreover, that rice was not purchased at a high rate and is not sought to be sold at a profit. The directions of Government are that that rice, if sold, should be sold at one anna less than the retail market rate of the locality. That is the order of Government, *viz.*, far from making a profit Government came to the conclusion in public interests to sell rice at a favourable rate. The rice

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so purchased was simply to be kept by way of precaution so that if, during the war scare the traders began to put up the price of rice, Government may combat it by storing some rice and tell the merchants that if they unreasonably raised the price, Government would sell this rice to frustrate their efforts at lower and more reasonable rates. As a matter of fact, that did bring down the price. It was a very effectual measure. Government are not particular as to selling this rice and there is no particular reason why they should adopt any special measures to facilitate the sale of this rice.

I may say at once that the circulation of this very foul accusation has been going on for some time. The whole point is that very little is heard of any plague in Cochin; nobody wants to make these things public. And the public health of Cochin is as much a matter of importance for Travancore as it is for Cochin because we are partners in the port of Cochin. If there is any default in taking the necessary steps to eradicate plague in Mattancherri, and accusations are made against the Travancore Government for taking measures to prevent the importation of plague into Travancore, it behoves this Government to make the position clear.

I am, however, in a position to say that, very fortunately, on account of the efforts made by Government and our Director of Public Health an arrangement has now been almost concluded between Travancore and Cochin to the effect—I hope that it will be implemented by the Cochin Government shortly—that hereafter the fumigation and the cyano-gassing should be conducted at Mattancherri in the presence of a *Travancore* Public Health official and that only after that process rice and other products could come from Cochin into Travancore. That would make it superfluous hereafter to have any cyano-gassing or fumigation of the *valloms* or at the frontiers. That is a tentative agreement and I hope that it will be implemented. It is hoped that, if, in a spirit of mutual accommodation, relevant and pertinent facts are mutually revealed and the measures taken in Cochin and the measures necessary and indispensable in Travancore are also continued, this very great menace will be combated successfully.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai: In view of the statements made by the Public Health Director and the Dewan-President, and of the assurance given that the measures will be continued, I withdraw the motion.

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn.

The House adjourned at 12-33 P. M.

A. GUNAMONY,

Secretary to the Sri Chitra State Council,